



SENATOR

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McManus Minutes



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“This office belongs to the citizens of the 35th district.”

State Senator Michelle A. McManus

Direct wine shipping bills receive unanimous support in Senate

Wineries could ship up to 1500 cases per year directly to Michigan consumers under legislation approved Thursday by the Michigan Senate. I have said from the beginning that I believe Michigan can responsibly and fairly regulate direct wine shipments in our state. This legislation strikes an important balance by giving Michigan wineries room to grow and blossom without threatening to undermine our state's three-tier system for distributing alcohol. The legislation, revised versions of Senate Bill 625 and House Bill 4959, is the result of months of negotiations. Under the package, sellers would be required to apply for a permit that would allow them to direct ship up to 1500 cases of wine to consumers each year. Sellers also would be required to submit quarterly reports to the Liquor Control Commission and pay all applicable sales and excise taxes. The U.S. Supreme Court recently struck down Michigan's law banning direct wine shipments from outside the state while allowing shipments from in-state wineries because it discriminated against out-of-state sellers.

Senate approves school employee health insurance changes

A plan to save money on school employee health insurance and put those dollars into the classroom won passage from the state Senate Thursday. The plan has broad-based support from school district administrators, educational groups and school employee unions, all of whom have told senators the plan saves hundreds of millions of dollars while maintaining excellent health-care benefits for school employees. Senate Bills 895-898 would enact changes proposed by the 35,000-member American Federation of Teachers-Michigan and the 6,000-member International Union of Operating Engineers Local 547, both members of the AFL-CIO. AFT-Michigan has estimated the changes would save \$156 million in the first year and up to \$233 million by the third year. The savings resulting from the legislation would come from:

- More efficient plan administration;
- Competitive bidding for health-insurance coverage;
- Pooling employees together to bring about reduced rates;
- Self-insuring;
- Arming employees with extra knowledge so they can shop around for the best care; and
- Creating a statewide catastrophic claims fund to shield districts from the costs of very high claims.

A study commissioned by the Legislature found that under the present system, school districts spend an average of \$11,362 per employee on health-care benefits while the state employees' plan costs \$9,212 per employee. The package now heads to the House of Representatives for consideration.

Contact Me

My door is always open. Please do not hesitate to contact me regarding state issues. You can reach my Lansing office by phone at: 517-373-1725; toll free at 866-305-2135, or contact my Cadillac District Office at 231-775-8599. If you received this as a forwarded message and would like to receive future legislative updates via e-mail, you can sign up at my website: <http://www.senate.michigan.gov/mcmanus>.